

## Lewis County

### Increasing Public Safety and Combating Crime:

#### Methamphetamine:

The number one cause of crime in Lewis County and throughout Southwest Washington is methamphetamine. Congressman Baird founded the Congressional Caucus to Fight and Control Methamphetamine, and through that organization he has worked diligently to provide Washington communities with funding to fight combat this scourge. Congressman Baird's efforts led to the inclusion of Clark, Cowlitz, and Lewis Counties in the Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area program. With support from this program, and thanks to the Congressman's leadership on the statewide Washington State Methamphetamine Initiative, more than \$11 million in federal dollars have come to our region to prevent meth use, crack down on meth cooks and dealers, clean meth contaminated sites, and provide treatment for those who are motivated and willing to work to kick their addictions.

#### Making Government More Effective and Efficient:

##### Streamlining the environmental permitting process:

Protecting the environment is always a priority, but regulatory processing and permitting have become unnecessarily costly and time consuming. In recent years, Congressman Baird has organized a series of meetings throughout Southwest Washington to bring local business leaders, farmers, builders, ports and others together with federal, state and local officials to improve the permitting process. As a direct result, several federal and state agencies have made significant progress in streamlining permits, reducing application backlogs and complexity, and improving coordination to expedite the process. There is still work to be done, and much room for improvement, but Congressman Baird will continue to work with the consumers of permits and agency representatives to push for further improvements in efficiency and savings in time and money.

### Expanding Transportation Alternatives:

#### Widening I-5 through Lewis County:

Congressman Baird has helped secure over \$3 million for the widening of Interstate 5 (I-5) from the Rush Road interchange to the Maytown interchange. Currently, this area of I-5 has only two lanes of travel

in each direction, creating a bottleneck when traffic north and south of this area, which had been traveling in three lanes, is compressed. Adding to the problem, the amount of traffic using I-5 has steadily increased in recent years, contributing to delays and congestion and increasing the safety risk. This project will increase capacity and improve safety along the interstate. I-5 is a critical component of both commerce and tourism in the state of Washington. Improving I-5 between Rush Road and Maytown is vital to the economic success of this area and to maintaining a positive quality of life for those who live and work there.

#### Centralia Flood Control Project:

Congressman Baird helped secure \$1 million for the Army Corps of Engineers to continue work on the Centralia Flood Control Project. For more than 70 years, the Corps has been searching for solutions to the chronic flooding problems throughout the Chehalis River Basin. Twice in the last fifteen years, Interstate 5 (I-5) and the north-south railway have closed for three days at a time due to flooding, at a cost of more than \$50 million per day. This funding will help complete construction design tasks related to the project. Additionally, Congressman Baird has fought to ensure that local government will be reimbursed for their out of pocket costs. As a result of this effort, local taxpayers will be reimbursed for more than \$6 million in project costs.

#### Replacing the Annonen Bridge:

In 1993, Lewis County received federal funding to replace of the Annonen Bridge. Replacement would be fully funded as long as the project moved forward in 10 years. Lewis County completed the preliminary work and sent their permit application to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in 1998. However, due to changes in the Endangered Species Act review process, a second biological assessment was required, which was completed in March 2002. By June of 2002, Lewis County still had not received a decision from either the Corps or US Fish and Wildlife. Lacking agency approval, and with the ten year deadline approaching, the County risked losing its federal funding for the project and also faced the prospect of having to pay back approximately \$99,000 spent on the work already completed. At the County's request, Congressman Baird contacted the Corps and other agencies to explain the situation. The permits were approved not long thereafter, just in time to meet the deadline and allow the project to move forward.

#### Leonard Bridge Repair:

Leonard Bridge needed support replacements or it risked being washed away during heavy rain. By June, Lewis County had not heard from the Corps on the status of the permits and the time of year when they could no longer work in the water was quickly approaching. Lewis County informed Congressman Baird that they needed to finish work by late September to ensure that it would be completed before their window of opportunity closed in October. Congressman Baird contacted

the Corps on behalf of Lewis County and the Corps expedited the 3 to 4 month biological evaluation review and federal permit process to less than one month. Repair work then began on Leonard Bridge in late August.

#### Protecting Jobs and Increasing Job Opportunities:

##### Morton Business Development Project:

Rail access is essential to economic industrial development, but for the past 24 years Morton has been without viable rail service. Thanks to efforts of the local community, service has once again been restored, but a great deal of work is needed to repair and replace deteriorated infrastructure and equipment.

To make these repairs possible, Rep. Baird secured \$1.2 million for rail improvements in Morton as part of the 2005 appropriations bill. These funds will be used to purchase three railcar-loading chutes, repair three spur tracks, and install two new crossing signals for State Route 7. The improvements will lower the cost of shipping products from Morton, which in turn make the products more competitive in the global market. These improvements will help secure several hundred family wage jobs at Morton lumber mills and other industries.

##### White Pass Ski Area Expansion:

For more than two decades the White Pass Ski Area has planned an expansion of trail, lift and lodge facilities into an area designated for that purpose in the 1983 Washington Wilderness Act. Congressman Baird knows the importance of tourism to the economy of the area and recognizes how beneficial this expansion could be. To help facilitate this project, and consistent with the original intent and express language of the 1983 legislation, Congressman Baird has drafted legislation clarifying that the intended 800 acre area was in fact designated for expansion of the ski area. The Congressman has personally visited the site, reviewed the plans for the expansion, and strongly believes it can and should be achieved in a way that will help the economy without harming the environment.

#### Protecting Mental Health Care:

##### Mental Health Care under Medicaid:

For the past 11 years Washington state has used federal Medicaid funds in conjunction with state funds to provide mental health care to Medicaid eligible patients as well as to patients who need service but do not qualify for Medicaid. In April 2004, the federal agency that oversees Medicaid and Medicare, CMS, required that, effective January 1, 2005, the state cease using their Medicaid funds to serve patients who do not qualify for Medicaid. This change, which came at a time the

State Legislature was out of session and could not meet to solve the problem, threatened to suddenly terminate mental health care for 40,000 patients across our state.

As a former clinical psychologist who has worked in community mental clinics, Congressman Baird understands the importance of mental health care in our communities. With the proper sustained treatment, people who would otherwise be debilitated by their illness can be functioning, contributing members of society. When he learned of the proposed rule change by CMS and the potential loss of treatment for patients in need, Congressman Baird took immediate action.

After consulting with members of the legislature and state agencies, Congressman Baird personally contacted administrators at the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). The Congressman drew upon his own professional background to explain the needs of the patients and the harm that could result from terminating their services. He then requested an extension be granted to give the state time to arrange alternative funding to continue the care. To their great credit, officials within CMS were willing to work closely with the Congressman and the state and in late December a six month waiver was granted, extending care through June 2005. This measure will save the state of Washington over \$20 million and, more importantly, will allow 40,000 of our citizens to continue to receive the care and treatment they need to be productive, functioning members of our communities.

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in Lewis County

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County Historical Museum

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Lewis  
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